Abstract
Although today it is the appearance of Jakarta Kota (formerly known as Batavia) that is most appealing to the general public, the problems and issues concerning this quarter of Greater Jakarta centre on the loss of socio-economic functionality, rather than the dilapidation of the building stock. Jakarta Kota is eroding from a lively colonial trading town (with the full range of economic and administrative functions) into what is now a quarter where the historic scenery is gradually fading. Based as it is, on sophisticated, classical European town planning and architecture, it has today hardly any reference to contemporary Indonesian society.

One should keep this in mind when preparing a conservation scheme for Jakarta Kota. Without a feasible social and economic vision for the future functioning of Kota within a (much) greater Jakarta, every action in the field of (integrated) conservation is bound to fail and will certainly not encourage private investors to participate.

An association of Indonesian business people, coming together in a body called ‘Jakarta old town, KotaKu’ intends to put a halt to the decay by revitalising this part of the town and conserving its specific urban and architectural features. Through ICOMOS, experts from the Netherlands were requested to provide technical support for this project. This paper outlines the nature of the project and of this international support.

Introduction
The modern city of Jakarta today includes not only the historic Sudanese harbour of Sunda Kelapa but also the remains of the historic commercial trading town of Batavia, which is now known as ‘Jakarta Kota’.

Founded on the island of Java, at the mouth of the Ciliwung River in the early 17th century by the VOC (Verenigde Ost Indische Compagnie or Dutch East India Trading Company), it functioned as a ‘hub’ for the VOC’s ambition to become an essential part of 17th century inter Asian trade. The town was built in accordance with classical European urban standards. The Ciliwung River was canalised and the whole urban area was drained by canals and intersected by narrow streets bordered by (mostly brick) buildings. The city combined trading, administrative, residential and commercial functions.

Due to an increasingly unhealthy situation in the 17th, but especially in the 18th century, well-to-do people started to move southwards, away from the city. At the end of the 18th century the administrative, governmental and military activities were also relocated to the south, thus creating a ‘new’ Batavia, called Weltevreden, (now ‘Medan Merdeka’). Commercial activities remained in old Batavia, and even boomed in the early decades of the 20th century; however, the global recession of the 1930s and the Second World War greatly affected this activity.

With the coming of Indonesia’s Independence in 1945 the city was renamed Jakarta. New commercial centres came into being and Batavia started to decline. Nowadays many buildings are standing idle and dilapidated, while the historic city as a whole is becoming merely a part of the rapidly growing Indonesian national capital.

Integrated conservation
Conserving an urban environment differs in many ways from the conservation of an individual building or monument. An urban environment is not only a collection of historic buildings, it is a living and dynamic organism, with a socio-economic background and potential for development. What is more, its inhabitants ensure that there are a large number of interested participants.

This means, moreover, that any conservation scheme for an urban structure needs the input of these interested participants and has to be accepted by the political decision makers. In addition one has to keep in mind that the dilapidation of an urban environment is (mostly) caused by the loss of socio-economic functions.

In order, therefore, to implement an urban conservation scheme one has to look for development opportunities for the existing, historic building stock and infrastructure in the contemporary society. Decision makers must be convinced that such opportunities are only possible on the basis of clear conservation and development policies, and conditions favourable for encouraging private investors.

To put it more formally, one has to make sure that any proposed conservation policy gains not only political commitment and public awareness, but also economic feasibility.

In order to get an insight in to these matters - keeping the target group of the local decision makers in mind – it is possible to develop a system which, after a quick scan of the historic identity of the subject area, an overview of the development opportunities can be attained. In a simple way the existing identity of a place is scanned by noting the historic value, the technical condition and the functions of the existing building stock and infrastructure. By means of a so-called SWOT analysis (Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) it is possible to identify the development opportunities and, of course, development risks. By making use of the above mentioned tools one can also calculate, approximately, how much money has to be invested to revitalise an historic quarter such as Jakarta Kota.

To guard against an overly ‘Eurocentric’ approach for the Kota project, and possible narrow-minded thinking by the experts, students of faculties of Architecture at local universities were invited to take part in the initial fact-finding. This had many advantages: firstly, young professionals received practical training in designing existing or historic areas and secondly, it encouraged unbiased creativity. In Jakarta the inventory of
When decision makers agree on proposed development ideas, as achieved through the outlined quick scan process, progress on the revitalisation program can commence; the public can be asked to participate; and, private investors can be invited to contribute.

Analysing urban development

A quick scan of the historical background of today's Jakarta (Kota) gives insight into its socio-economic movements throughout time. Taking the establishment of Batavia (as the predecessor of Jakarta) as a starting point, one sees the founding of a European (colonial) city at the mouth of the Ciliwung River in the 17th century.

From the middle of the 17th century, well-to-do people started to move to the south outside the walled city of Batavia, due to diseases, especially malaria. At the end of the 18th century the city was practically deserted and deterioration in the building stock began to set in. Moreover, in that period the VOC lost its monopoly position in Asian-European trade and ceased to exist. The Dutch government consequently assumed control.

The first Governor-General representing the Dutch government, Daendels, moved the administrative functions out of the walled city to the south (Weltevreden, now Medan Merdeka); filled in several canals in Batavia; and had the fish ponds along the coast (outside the walled city) shut down. The castle, until that time the administrative centre of the VOC, was torn down and a highway was constructed through Java from west to east (Grote Postweg, Jalan Raya Pos) which made the construction of other modern harbours like Cirebon, Semarang and Surabaya feasible.

At the end of the 19th century the walled city of Batavia functioned only as a business centre with offices, banks, agencies for insurance and shipping companies. At the beginning of the 20th century, after the introduction of a new policy by the Dutch East Indies government, together with trade liberation and the withdrawal of most of the government monopolies (a legacy of the VOC), Kota again began to bloom economically. Although much of this economic progress was based on the exploitation of raw materials outside of Java, the
legislative (and military) background guaranteed Batavia a central position in Indonesia.

In 1877 the harbour of Batavia, known as Sunda Kelapa, lost its main shipping and disembarkation functions when the new harbour of Tanjung Priok (east of Batavia) came into use. Despite this relocation of disembarkation, wholesale trade managed to survive in Kota due to a newly constructed railway (1885) and a canal to the new harbour area. Retail trade, an early function of the city, is the main remaining economic activity in today’s Kota and provides a key definition of its character. Nevertheless, it does not provide a sufficient base for a vital future.

Kota’s history of changing functionality was interlinked to changes in its morphology. Three main physical interventions determined Kota’s past developments and present situation.

Firstly, Daendels’ operations were part of his policy to improve living conditions in the overcrowded and unhealthy city of Batavia. For this reason not only were the castle and city walls demolished and government functions moved out of the city, but also many of the canals were filled in. Batavia gained air and space through this rough reconstruction and also became better connected to its surrounding suburbs.

The main urban intervention in Kota after Daendels’ operations was the reconstruction of the railway station area during the 1920’s. The south-eastern part of Kota had to make room for a completely new and modern quarter consisting of huge building blocks.

A new railway station was erected around an elegant square, which also included the Factorij building and the Escompto Bank building, all in an ornate art-deco architectural style. The huge building block of the Javasche Bank existed prior to this intervention which must be considered an important new stimulus to Kota’s strategic position.

The toll road, constructed on a fly-over during the 1990s, runs through Kota from east to west, dividing the northern part of Kota from the southern area. The highway provides Jakarta with the necessary means of transportation, but it also deprives Kota of its historical unity.

Although decentralisation has been rapid in recent years, the central position of today’s Jakarta is still present. But due to the growth of Jakarta southwards and the erection of new commercial and economic centres, Jakarta Kota has lost its economic position and therefore its ‘historic’ function. It is not the centre of town any more, but rather is simply a quarter on the outskirts of Greater Jakarta.

**Present situation**

As mentioned above local architecture students prepared a quick scan inventory of specific items of historic Jakarta. The quick scan is necessary to attract the formal attention of decision makers. It certainly does not constitute a full scientific report, but it presents a rough and broad insight into the characteristic ‘historical’ items of the town, especially the historic identity of the urban structure and the opportunities it offers for development.

The scan considers the following:

- **Historic identity**
  - The complete building stock and the infrastructure of the area concerned are taken into account and the question asked: Do these still represent the historic identity and structure, or are they out of place?
  - The urban structures and infrastructure of today’s Jakarta Kota largely date back to the historic city of Batavia. The main alterations, as discussed in the previous section, are to be found in the former castle area, which was demolished during the rule of Daendels; in the area around the railway station, dating back to the 1920s; and the toll road, constructed in the 1990s.
  - Areas with a strong historical character are to be found around the main canal (Kali Besar); the area around the former City Hall; and the railway station. The historic harbour and adjacent fish market are relatively well preserved, although new systems for handling cargo (at the harbour) have been introduced.

- **Technical condition**
  - A scan of the technical condition of the complete building stock shows that the majority of Kota’s buildings are in need of some repair and there are some buildings which require complete renovation. The buildings in a poor condition are scattered across Kota, with a concentration on the east bank of the Kali Besar. The Chinese quarters are in a relatively good state of repair; however the architecture – though not the urban pattern – has been somewhat modernised.

- **Functions**
  - As noted before, Kota has lost much of its earlier variety of functions and is now dominated by a large number of struggling retail shops, most of which are neither very sophisticated nor highly specialised and consequently they tend to have a rather marginal base of existence. The scan shows a lot of vacant buildings along the Kali Besar. Many of
these are former warehouses, which have lost their function. Public functions and institutional functions are mainly concentrated around the area of the former Town Hall and the railway station square. Although some of the impressive bank buildings have been preserved, the ‘banking business’ has been replaced and the buildings adapted for use as museums. The residential quarter around the Fish Market is mainly a slum area. Notable however is Kota’s central position in transport infrastructure providing a hub for Jakarta’s main roads, railway, bus routes and canals. Kota therefore still occupies a strategic position in metropolitan Jakarta.

**SWOT-analysis**

As mentioned, for the ‘quick scan’ methodology to present development opportunities on the basis of the historic urban and architectural pattern, it is necessary to undertake a SWOT analysis. On the basis of the present socio-economic situation of Kota the SWOT analysis provides the following details:

The strengths of today’s Kota are its strategic position within Jakarta, due to the networks of primary infrastructure; its historical identity based upon its urban and architectural features; its diversity of atmospheres between the connected urban quarters; its extensive and small scale commerce and retail trade; the (Chinese) food courts; its leisure and recreation functions; its function as centre for Chinese culture; and its involvement in tourist activities.

The weaknesses noted include its congested traffic and thus difficult accessibility; the many vacant buildings; the attraction for marginal activities pushing out vital functions (and related to that, the presence of squatters); the alleged illegal activities and high crime rate; the unorganised street vendors; the lack of maintenance and dilapidated appearance; the untidiness of the streets and sidewalks; the poor water management; the lack of public facilities; and its very dense population.

Opportunities for Kota are expected to lie in the field of commerce and retail trade, representative offices, public transport, small scale craftsmanship, leisure, education and information, cultural activities, food courts, tourism, museums and historical research.

Threats to Kota’s development are considered to be the existing tax system, increasing traffic streams, lack of law enforcement and lack of policy implementation.

**Future perspectives**

Having analysed Kota’s historical identity and presented the data concerning its existing building stock in previous sections, the following offers a view on development opportunities.

1. The western part of Kota has a mixed identity, containing commercial buildings and residential dwellings. Its architectural quality is not comparable to that of the Kali Besar area. Due to the general dilapidation of Kota after the 1960s, this part of town suffers from low living standards and loss of entrepreneurs. Revitalisation of commercial activities and housing projects may offer opportunities for the badly needed upgrading. Tourism might be a generating factor for small craftsmanship and the sale of specific products.

2. The eastern part of Kota used to be the border of Batavia’s city centre, but in contrast with the western boundary, it hardly bears such features any more. Its urban pattern and its architectural characteristics lack coherence. The area therefore offers opportunities for new initiatives supporting new developments in the historic core of Kota, which will involve activities in the fields of industry, workshops and services.

3. The Chinese part of Jakarta Kota contains mostly retail trade and commercial activities in a ‘new’ setting. Although its architectural features are moderate and not historic, an interesting aspect is the qualities of the small residential areas, mostly featuring inner courtyards. Some of them have a traditional architectural form. This area offers opportunities in the field of (large scale) retail and commerce within the existing urban pattern. In addition, the function of the courtyards might be strengthened in order to maintain a habitable residential environment.

4. The northern part of Kota (close to the historic harbour, Sunda Kelapa) comprises a residential area where living conditions are very poor. Development should be aimed at improving living conditions, especially the housing stock. The area offers opportunities for industry and workshops and storage.

5. The terrain of the former castle of Batavia, destroyed by Daendels in the early 19th century, is now an unorganised quarter. The location of the so-called ‘Oostzijde pakhuizen’ (eastern warehouses) suffers severely from the negative effects of the toll road. Reorganising the area will provide new opportunities given its strategic location between the port and the city. New impetus for processing industry, workshops and storage will strengthen its features.

---

*Figure 4: The old colonial City Hall now operating as an historical museum. Photo: Peter van Dun, November 2005.*
Development opportunities and risks

1. Kali Besar and surroundings, such as the area in front of the old City Hall (now an historical museum) and the railway station have high historic value, but are very dilapidated. Many buildings remain idle and in poor condition. In former days the area was the economic and administrative heart of Batavia. It now offers opportunities for new representative functions and offices, for cultural activities, tourism and related entertainment. One should however be careful, for new building activity can easily affect the precious surroundings in a negative way.

2. The western side of Kota, which was once the western border of Batavia’s city centre, still bears the character of the town’s edge. It contains warehouses and, relatively, much greenery. Development and upgrading of the premises are necessary options, but there is the risk of destroying the already mentioned character of ‘the outskirts of the town’. Initiatives for storage facilities, industry and workshops offer development opportunities. Open spaces, views and vegetation should not be affected.

Development risks

1. The former Chinese areas of Batavia still maintain a strong Chinese character, consisting of small scale commercial activities and retail trade and an urban pattern of long but small parcels of land and traditional Chinese architecture. Due to today’s push for new construction, these features are under pressure and might easily disappear. New initiatives, fitting in with the character of the area are very much needed.

2. The area around the fish market is one of the oldest parts of Old Jakarta. It still has a strong identity and the market strengthens this feeling of social coherence. Initiatives to enlarge existing activities might easily affect its delicate identity adversely. Some of its tourist potential around Museum Bahari (a shipping museum in a former VOC warehouse) could however be explored, as long as it is kept low-key.

Batavia, once an important trading city with an elegant appearance, and a position at the centre of world trade, has through time became a peripheral and dilapidated quarter of the far larger metropolis, Jakarta. During this process it has lost all of its vital functions so that it is deprived of its means of existence and is now in a marginal position. The restoration of Kota’s vitality will depend on the ability to attract new functions which fit into its building stock and historical features. The revitalization of Kota therefore has to be mainly executed by private parties and depends on their willingness to invest in its building stock. The role of local government in this respect is limited yet strategic. It should be directed towards creating favourable conditions for investments in the right way. The development opportunities and risks for Kota’s historical identity, as presented, may be used to define a spatial policy and may offer a basis for a land use plan.

Effectiveness

The results of the quick scan operation were presented to the general public and representatives of the government of Jakarta in February 2006. There seemed to be a general understanding of the proposals, but the major questions of implementation remained vague. Political commitment is an especially tough item to tackle. Many decision makers are reluctant to commit themselves to a programme that exceeds their period in office. Since private investors are in need of a guaranteed continuity of (conservation) policy before they are willing to invest, the lack of commitment is the greatest bottleneck for integrated urban revitalisation. This is, for that matter, not only the case in Indonesia, but common around the world.

In the mean time, the project is waiting for individual initiatives (of which there are some possibilities); however, all to often, proposals are unique, not sustainable and not in the interest of the residents of the area.

Bibliography

Voskuil, R.P.G.A. 1993, Batavia; Beeld van een Stadt, Asia Maior, Purmerend.